



The Commission on  
Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity  
**CWCSEO**  
Connecticut General Assembly

**Testimony of The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity  
Presented to the Education Committee  
Wednesday, March 15, 2023, ~ 12:00 PM**

**In Support Of:**

- \*[S.B. No. 1197](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.**
- \*[S.B. No. 1198](#) (RAISED) AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCHOOL INDOOR AIR QUALITY WORKING GROUP**
- \*[S.B. No. 1199](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING EQUITY IN EDUCATION.**
- \*[S.B. No. 1200](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SPECIAL EDUCATION.**
- \*[H.B. No. 6879](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING TEACHER CERTIFICATION.**
- \*[H.B. No. 6880](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING ASSORTED REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES.**
- \*[H.B. No. 6881](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES RELATED TO EDUCATOR COMPENSATION AND PARAEDUCATORS.**
- \*[H.B. No. 6882](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING MANDATE RELIEF.**
- \*[H.B. No. 6883](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.**
- \*[H.B. No. 6884](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION.**

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, Senator Winfield, Representative Leeper, and other distinguished members of the Education Committee. The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity would like to **express support** for SB 1197, SB 1198, SB 1199, SB 1200, HB 6879, HB 6880, HB 6881, HB 6882, HB 6883, and HB 6884.

**[S.B. No. 1197](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.**

**The Commission supports S.B. 1197.** Currently, in the state of Connecticut, the labor participation rate is 64.2 percent, which is significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels.<sup>1</sup> The Commission supports this effort to get workers back into the workforce and make investments in workforce development to increase labor participation.

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<sup>1</sup> [Labor Force Participation Rate for Connecticut \(LBSSA09\) | FRED | St. Louis Fed \(stlouisfed.org\)](#)



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### **S.B. No. 1198 (RAISED) AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCHOOL INDOOR AIR QUALITY WORKING GROUP**

Hundreds of school buildings across Connecticut are served by heating, ventilation, and HVAC systems that are in need of repair or replacement. Poor air quality in the school environment is making children and teachers sick. In fact, poor indoor air quality and environmental quality will: “increase the severity and frequency of asthma, allergies and other respiratory illnesses; aids transmission of viruses and bacteria resulting in more colds, flu and serious infectious diseases such as pertussis or tuberculosis, can raise the risk of long-term, even life-threatening illnesses, such as cancer and cardiovascular disease, particularly among school employees”.<sup>2</sup>

Schools throughout the state of Connecticut are finding unhealthy conditions, and are forced to make extensive repairs, which is an extensive undertaking and often falls on the municipalities.

**The Commission supports the Education Committee’s efforts to improve air quality in schools.**

### **S.B. No. 1199 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING EQUITY IN EDUCATION.**

Research supports the trend that a diverse educator workforce leads to increased student retention rates, higher student performance, and better mental and behavioral outcomes for students.<sup>3</sup> After 2016 data revealed that less than 10% of Connecticut teachers identified as a person of color, the Department of Education sought to increase the diversity of our state’s educator workforce.<sup>4</sup>

In 2021, Governor Lamont announced that this goal had been met as 1,084 teachers of color were added to the statewide educator population.<sup>5</sup> However, despite these efforts and gains, demographic data shows a disproportionate gap in the growth of teachers of color and students of color: educators of color experienced a 2.5% increase from 2012-2022, but students of color increased 10.8% in that same timeframe – this gap being most prominent in public schools.<sup>6</sup>

**The Commission supports bills like SB 1199 that reinforce the state’s dedication to diversifying Connecticut’s educator workforce because it is important for students to have representative role models in the classroom who look like them, reflect their lived**

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<sup>2</sup> [Addressing Indoor Air Quality in Schools | NEA](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Study: Despite Efforts, Diversity Gap Widens | CT News Junkie](#)

<sup>4</sup> [CT Reaches Educational Benchmark: 10% of Teachers Are of Color | NBC Connecticut](#)

<sup>5</sup> [The Diversity Gap: Exploring the Pace of Diversifying the Teacher Workforce in Connecticut | ERN Connecticut](#)

<sup>6</sup> [The Diversity Gap: Exploring the Pace of Diversifying the Teacher Workforce in Connecticut | ERN Connecticut](#)



experiences, and are emblematic of our world's increasing globalization. We appreciate the diligent work of the Education Committee in authoring and uplifting bills like SB 1199.

### **S.B. No. 1200 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SPECIAL EDUCATION.**

**The Commission supports SB 1200 in its entirety but would like to emphasize the following sections:**

**We support section 1.** COVID stimulus money should not count in calculating the per pupil cost for purposes of the district's claim to excess cost reimbursement. If that money was included in the calculation of the per pupil cost, the most underfunded districts would not receive as much reimbursement from the state.

**We strongly support section 3,** which reauthorizes and expands the mandate of the task force on the provision and funding of special education.

**The Commission supports section 4,** which guarantees an interpreter for a non-English speaking parent at a PPT meeting.

Section 7 extends the effort to expand the use of school-based health centers. School based health centers are another line of prevention for many students, particularly underserved children who lack medical and psychological supports.

### **H.B. No. 6880 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING ASSORTED REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES.**

According to National PTA research, family involvement in education leads to greater student success and increased confidence regardless of parental race/ethnicity, class, or level of education.<sup>7</sup>

This bill establishes a parent advisory committee tasked with – among other responsibilities – providing recommendations on topics related to improving elementary and secondary education, such as teacher recruitment, special education, testing and assessment, equitable distribution of teachers, diversity among teachers, school safety and social and emotional learning. Dedicating energy and resources to figuring out ways to increase parental involvement in children's education across the state is a worthy investment, since the earlier educators establish family engagement, the more effective they are in raising student performance; family partnerships formed during elementary school years build a strong foundation for future student success and continued engagement.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> [Experts Discuss the Importance of Positive Parental Involvement in Education | Rasmussen University](#)

<sup>8</sup> [How Family Engagement Leads to Student Success | Waterford.org](#)



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Families often encounter obstacles that can stymie their ability to be involved in their children's schooling (i.e. transportation insecurity or nontraditional work schedules). **The Commission supports HB 6680 because allowing all minor parents to request enrollment in adult education and establishing a parent advisory group assists in bridging the multigenerational experience in education and encourages intergenerational collaboration for students and their parents in the state.** Furthermore, increasing accessibility to educational materials such as curriculums, meeting agendas, and school meal nutritional information will also help parents feel more involved in their children's education as it demystifies some of the components of the education experience in our state.

**\*H.B. No. 6881 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES RELATED TO EDUCATOR COMPENSATION AND PARAEDUCATORS.**

As of February 2023, K-12 paraeducator salary in Connecticut ranges from \$10,985 to \$35,007, with the median falling at \$24,664 per year.<sup>9</sup> A significant portion of the state's workforce is comprised of educators, yet the poverty rate for early educators in Connecticut is 14.1 percent, much higher than for Connecticut workers in general (7.3 percent) and 7 times as high as for K-8 teachers (2 percent).<sup>10</sup>

As the state and country experience difficulties with teacher recruitment and retention – nearly 75% of Connecticut educators say they are more likely to leave the profession now than they were a few years ago<sup>11</sup> – compensation and quality of life are important considerations in alleviating teacher burnout and turnover.

This bill's allocation of grant funds to support teacher and paraeducator salaries and other provisions to help with employment salaries and benefits are necessary components for helping educators in this state. **We applaud the Education Committee for HB 6881 and support this bill.**

**H.B. No. 6882 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING MANDATE RELIEF.**

**The Commission supports HB 6882 as we support a review of all mandates, especially unfunded ones.**

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<sup>9</sup> [Paraeducator \(K-12\) Salary in Connecticut | Salary.com](#)

<sup>10</sup> [State Profiles: Connecticut | Berkeley Center for the Study of Child Care Employment](#)

<sup>11</sup> [New Survey Reveals Widespread Burnout Among Connecticut Teachers, Leaving Many to Consider New Careers | CT Insider](#)



**H.B. No. 6883 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.**

**The Commission supports HB 6883.** Section 5 expands eligibility for students with disabilities until the end of the school year (June 30) in which the student turns 22. This will ensure that students receive a full year of transition services. Section 6 conforms the transitioning bill of rights to the new age limit. Section 7, 8, and 10 are also conforming.

**H.B. No. 6884 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION.**

“There are roughly 1,221 teaching vacancies, with 25% in special education.”<sup>12</sup> **The Commission strongly supports HB 6884 as this bill will help reduce the teacher shortage in Connecticut.**

Section 1 establishes a minimum salary for teachers that is at least four times the federal poverty level. Increasing the salary for teachers will help recruit and retain teachers in the state.

Section 2 of this bill establishes a tax credit against personal income tax imposed for individuals employed by a local or regional board of education. This is a \$500.00 refundable income tax credit for teachers with an initial certificate.

Section 11 of this bill states that each local and regional board of education shall provide for play based learning during each regular school day in kindergarten and any preschool program and permits teachers to utilize play based learning during instructional time. Play is integral part of students learning experiences, and will help students develop stronger social and emotional skills. Play helps children learn interpersonal skills, fosters curiosity, imagination, and creativity. Despite the importance of play in the early grades the amount of time dedicated to play in the early grades has decreased, and an emphasis has been put on standardized testing. Integrating more active, play-based approaches to learning in the early grades will help students’ social emotional skills.

**Lastly, the Commission support section 19 of this bill, but asks that the Committee considers adding the Commission as a member of the task force or giving the Executive Director of the Commission the appointing authority on this task force.** The current system for financing pensions puts the districts with the greatest need at a disadvantage in terms of compensating their teaching workforce. In fact, “although students from low-income families make up 42.8% of the student population, they receive only 33.5% share of the state’s Per Pupil

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<sup>12</sup> [Educating Connecticut: Teacher shortages impacting districts across the state \(wtnh.com\)](http://www.wtnh.com)



Pension Subsidy. Their wealthier peers make up 57.2% of the student population in the state, but receive a 66.5.% share.”<sup>13</sup>

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, we appreciate the strong leadership of the Education Committee.

Testimony prepared by Megan Baker, CWCSEO Asian American Pacific Islander Policy Analyst and Thomas Nuccio, CWCSEO Children’s Policy Analyst.

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<sup>13</sup> Who Benefits? How Teacher Pension Financing Impacts Student Equity in Connecticut